

From certificates to mint medals: A guide for gift-givers

By Roger Boye

IF YOU STILL have coin collectors on your holiday shopping list, don't fret. Here are some suggestions to help ensure gift-giving success.

● A gift certificate from your friend's favorite coin store. Most established collectors would appreciate much more receiving a gift certificate — and thus be able to select their own coins — than to receive coins as a gift.

If you buy coins, you obviously run the risk of getting something the collector already has, or something he or she doesn't want. And it's difficult for a noncollector to determine a good coin buy. If you "get taken," both of you will feel bad.

● A "birthday year" set of coins. This gift would be appropriate for a novice, especially a younger person just getting started in the hobby.

As the name implies, the set would include a coin of each denomination made during the year the person was born. The price would vary with the actual year and condition of the coins (a set of uncirculated coins dated 1963, for example, would cost from \$6 to \$7 in most coin stores). Have the dealer put the coins in an attractive plastic holder.

● Subscription to a coin newspaper or periodical. Such publications are invaluable to collectors. But a word of warning: Some persons do not like to receive such publications at home, and would rather have them mailed to an office address or post office box, or purchase them on the newsstand. They worry that by receiving a coin publication at home, they are publicizing the fact they collect, even if just the mailman knows. Thus, it would be best to check whether your collector friend is so sensitive.

● Coin books. Hundreds of numismatic books are published for the beginning through the advanced collector. Most make wonderful gifts. One book now being distributed to coin shops and bookstores, "Official ANA Grading Standards for United States Coins," would almost guarantee a happy collector. The \$5.95 book will likely become a hobby best seller.

● Numismatic accessories. Such paraphernalia as coin folders, coin tubes, and magnifying glasses are essential to the coin hobbyist. Check your friend's want list and visit a coin store.

● A bullion gold coin. The novice or even a noncollector might be thrilled by a gift of gold that doesn't have to cost a small fortune. A "bullion gold coin" is saved strictly because of its gold content, not for any collector value. The most widely advertised is the South African krugerrand, an expensive nugget (about \$170) because of its one-ounce size.

But there are many smaller and less expensive bullion gold coins, including the Mexican two peso (about \$9), or the Austrian one ducat (about \$21). Check a local coin store.

● Medals and other goodies from the private mints. The giant in the field, the Franklin Mint, says it has about 75 items for holiday gift giving. Included are a series of medals that accompany greeting cards for Christmas and Hanukkah, pewter sculptures called "The Carol Singers," cuff links, tie tacks, money clips, and key chains.

Of course, many coin collectors do not collect medals and other private mint offerings. So before purchasing them as a gift, determine whether your collecting friend considers them legitimate.